

Ada de Wit Appointed Curator of Decorative Art at the Cleveland Museum of Art

Friday February 10, 2023



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Cleveland (February 9, 2023)—The Cleveland Museum of Art (CMA) announced today the appointment of Ada de Wit as curator of decorative art, following an international search.

In her new role at the CMA, de Wit will oversee the display, care and development of the museum's collection of European and American decorative art from 1500 to the present. She will curate special exhibitions and reinstall galleries in the permanent collection. The museum's collection of decorative art is lauded for its importance and quality, with many works considered some of the finest of their type in the world.

As curator of works of art and sculpture at the Wallace Collection, London—where she has been employed for eight years—de Wit is responsible for a diverse collection of more than 1,000 objects, including sculpture, silver and precious objects. The breadth of de Wit's scholarship and experience is impressive. Her expertise is in precious metalwork, and she

has conducted in-depth research on subjects ranging from 17th-century Augsburg drinking vessels and 19th-century Breslau silver to Chinese gold from the Qianlong period; she also has worked on 18th-century French furniture and Sèvres porcelain. De Wit is an internationally recognized expert on Grinling Gibbons, the Anglo-Dutch sculptor and woodcarver known for his work at Windsor Castle and St. Paul's Cathedral as well as other famous country houses and churches. De Wit was the co-organizer for an international conference on Gibbons that took place in June 2022 at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Previous to her employment at the Wallace Collection, de Wit worked for the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, where she catalogued and researched the museum's glass collection. De Wit also has research experience working for an art dealer specializing in Dutch silver.

"Ada is a brilliant, sophisticated scholar whose breadth of interest, knowledge and experience is remarkable," said William M. Griswold, director and president of the CMA. "Her expertise in 18th-century European porcelain, silver and furniture will serve the CMA extremely well as we reinstall our galleries of French and German fine and decorative art (216A and B). Ada's interests extend from the Renaissance through the 20th century, ranging from Saint-Porchaire ceramics and 17th-century Dutch silver through the decorative art of the Bauhaus, all of which will immeasurably enrich the development of our collection and future special exhibitions."

The CMA collections for which de Wit will be responsible are internationally celebrated. In European decorative art, particular strengths from the 16th and 17th centuries comprise Italian maiolica and German glass; French ceramics, including Saint-Porchaire and Palissy wares; Limoges enamels; and English silver. The museum's holdings of 18th-century French decorative art are among the most important in the United States, with strengths in Rococo furniture, silver and ceramics. Works by Peter Carl Fabergé are considered among the finest of their type in the world. Aesthetic Movement furniture and glass are particular strengths of the American collection, and Louis Comfort Tiffany is richly represented as well.

"The CMA's collection of decorative art is of international importance, and I am honored to become its new curator," said de Wit. "I look forward to sharing my enthusiasm for the collection with diverse audiences and helping the museum's visitors discover its riches. The CMA's mission to create transformative experiences 'for the benefit of all the people forever' is close to my heart. I certainly feel welcome, and my wish is for every visitor to feel the same way and to have a great experience exploring decorative art. I am also excited to call Cleveland my new home."

In terms of publications and exhibitions, de Wit recently authored *Grinling Gibbons and His Contemporaries (1650–1700): The Golden Age of Woodcarving in the Netherlands and Britain* (2022). Additional scholarly publications include “Asian Art in the Wallace Collection” (with Helen Jacobsen and Tobias Capwell), in *Orientations* (November–December 2018); “New Light on a Staircase of 1699–1700 in Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam,” in *Burlington Magazine* (February 2016); and “Grand Staircase and Joinery Work on the Lange Vijverberg, The Hague (The Netherlands) in Light of Documents,” in *Between Carpentry and Joinery: Wood Finishing Work in European Medieval and Modern Architecture* (2016). In 2018, for the Wallace Collection’s new exhibition space, de Wit curated the inaugural exhibition, *Sir Richard Wallace: The Collector*, which received five-star reviews by major British newspapers; *The Guardian* called it “a sumptuous survey of art and opulence, a portrait of the art collector as dreamer.” De Wit has presented numerous public talks, lectures and scholarly papers on a variety of subjects related to decorative art throughout Europe.

De Wit earned a doctorate from Radboud University in Nijmegen, the Netherlands; her Master of Arts in art history is from the University of Wrocław, Poland; and her second Master of Arts in decorative art and historic interiors is from the University of Buckingham in collaboration with the Wallace Collection, London. She begins her new responsibilities at the CMA on August 1, 2023.